

Dr. Robert W. Cooke's Office
Holmdel, Monmouth County, New Jersey

HABS-NJ-666

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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Dr. Robert W. Cooke's Office
Holmdel, Monmouth County, New Jersey

Owner: Mr. Theron McCampbell (resident in adjoining house)

Date of Erection: Probably 1823

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Dr. Robert Wheeler Cooke (1797-1867) original owner

Present Condition: Building moved in 1910 to new foundation and site on same farm and is used as a studio by Mrs. McCampbell

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - brick (1910)

Exterior walls - timber frame, clapboarded painted white

Interior walls - lath and plaster on studding

Chimney - brick (fireplace hearth is modern brick)

Roof - gable, wood shingles, not original

Flooring - modern, laid over old floor boards

Historical Data:

The identification of Dr. Robert W. Cooke as the original owner of this building (which is unique in our survey as the earliest one erected exclusively as a medical clinic or dispensary) has been established by search of title of the property to verify testimony of his descendants.

In response to our letter of inquiry, Dr. Robert A. Cooke of 60 East 58th Street, New York City, writes under date of 16 February 1941 as follows.(quote)

This is in reply to your letter of January 14th directed to my father, Dr. Henry G. Cooke of Colts Neck, New Jersey, the son of Dr. Robert Wheeler Cooke.

Dr. Robert W. Cooke went to what is now Holmdel, New Jersey in 1820. At that time it was known as Baptist Town and Dr. Cooke was responsible for the change in its name. He was then a young physician and bought the farm known as Ramanessan Farm. On it he erected first the building to which you refer. The actual date of building and the architect are not known. As he was married in 1830 and took his bride to the large house now occupied by Mr. Theron McCampbell, the original building must have been erected between 1820 and 1830. The present site is not the one on which it stood originally, having been moved by Mr. McCampbell shortly after he purchased the property from my father. After 1830 the building was used as a surgery, the main room downstairs being a waiting room, the small room to the left was the office. It is believed that the upstairs room was originally the bedroom for Dr. Cooke before the large house was built by him and completed by 1830. He left this estate to his oldest son, Henry Ganssevoort Cooke, who used this building as his office until the place was sold to Mr. McCampbell. Dr. Robert W. Cooke's father was Dr. Ambrose Ellis Cooke, born in Newton, Sussex Co., N.J. July 11, 1772. He was practicing physician in Bound Brook, N. J. where he died Jun 28, 1828 and was buried in the little old cemetery in Bound Brook where his grave is properly marked and cared for. His wife, Sarah Pearsall Wheeler,* came to Holmdel to live with her son after her husband's death. She is buried in the Cooke family lot at the Brick Church near Marlboro, New Jersey.

* Dr. Ambrose Cook and Miss Sally P. Wheeler were married 27 June 1794, per records of Hanover Presb. Ch., Morris Co., N. J. (L.D.C.)

In support of the above account, the following documentary data derived by search in the County records is of interest.

By deed of 27 January 1823, Ruliff Smock of Middletown Township, Monmouth County, conveyed to Dr. Robert Cook^(a) of same place three tracts of land there, being part of the farm formerly belonging to one John Bennet, respectively farmland, woodland and meadow land. The first of these was described as bounded west by the highway (Middletown Road north from Holmdel) north by the farm of Albert Bennet, east by that of the Reverend Samuel Van Vranken, south by the church lot, the land of John Lane and a ditch.

(a) Robert Woodruff Cooke*, M.D., b. 21 Jan. 1797 in Newtown, Sussex Co., N.J., son of Dr. Ambrose Ellis Cooke of (Bound Brook) Somerset Co., and grandson of Col. Ellis Cooke of Hanover, Morris Co. He entered the office of Dr. Valentine Mott in N.Y.C. and was graduated from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in that city. In July 1820, he began practice at Holmdel, Monmouth Co. N.J., where he d. 27 Dec. 1867 and was buried at the Brick Church near Marlborough. He mar. Sarah Cansevoort of Albany, N.Y., who survived him with three sons. (Ellis, History of Mon. Co., N.J., 1880, pp. 327-329). "Dr. Cooke was not only a good physician but a skillful surgeon. He excelled in the latter. He had a taste for horticulture and agriculture, in each of which he was successful. He continued in the performance of the onerous labor of an extensive country practice, fulfilling all its requirements faithfully and conscientiously." (Excerpt from obituary notice by A. B. Dayton, M.D., publ. in Transactions of the Medical Society of New Jersey, 1868, pp. 113-115). * Notice that his grandson above quoted gives the middle name as Wheeler, his mother's surname. L.D.C.

The grantee, Dr. Robert Cooke is thus shown as resident in the township at that date, and probably had been there for some three years previous. Evidently this house on the farm thus acquired was built subsequently in or before 1830, after he had this unique medical building erected for his own use. The latter then fronted the east side of Middletown Road, but in 1910 the present owner moved it some 70 feet eastward and 40 feet north to new foundations on a site behind the said house and fronting on a road which had been cut through the farm at some time after Dr. Cooke purchased the land. Record of the name of designer of this building unfortunately has escaped our efforts at discovery. After the death of Dr. Cooke in 1867 the property passed through the following named owners to the present.

By deed of 4 November 1872, Ambrose W. Cooke of Holmdel Township, and Robert W. Cooke of Atlantic Township conveyed to Dr. Henry G. Cooke, also of Holmdel, (being the three sons and heirs of Dr. Robert W. Cooke deceased intestate) all their undivided two-thirds share in this "Ramanessin Farm" of 121 acres, "with all and singular the buildings" etc.

The grantee, Dr. Henry G. Cooke^(b) thus succeeded his father in the homestead and in his medical practice. By 13 October 1909, he had

(b) Henry G. Cooke, M.D., son of Dr. Robert W. Cooke of Holmdel, was born 3 Feb. 1833 on the homestead there, educated under Wm. Woodhull at Freehold and graduated from Rutgers College 1853, studied medicine under his father and later under Dr. Willard Parker of N.Y.C. and graduated from College of Physicians and Surgeons 1857 to enter practice with his father in Holmdel. He served as surgeon of 29th Regt. N.J. Vols. for 9 months in 1862, with the army of the Potomac in the battles of Fredericksburg and of Chancellorsville. He resumed his practice at Holmdel and was president of the Mon. Co. Med. Assoc., member of the N.J. State Med. Soc. and of the Amer. Med. Soc. He mar. 1876 Maria B. Cowdrey of N.Y.C. and had issue - Sarah, Maria, Robert and Susan. (Ellis, History cited above, pp. 341-342 with cut).

retired to the city of New Brunswick, New Jersey, on which date he gave deed conveying to Theron McCampbell of New York City the 120 acre farm in Holmdel Township, Monmouth County, "on which Henry G. Cooke formerly lived and now occupied by Webster Jones." Mr. McCampbell remains as owner of the property at the date of our survey of the medical building (which Mrs. McCampbell uses as a studio) in August 1940.

Reference:

Search of title in land records of Monmouth County by William Brown, H.A.B.S. research editor, reported 18 December 1940

Lewis D. Cook
Supervising Historian

Approved:

Seymour Williams
SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.
District Officer